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CURRENT LITERATURE.

BOOK REVIEWS.

A primary reader.

THE revolution which the teaching of reading has undergone in late years demands books which shall not only provide exercise for the vocal cords, but also interest the pupil and command his attention. For this reason, instead of reading selections from the great orators, poets, and dramatists before the child can possibly understand or appreciate the subject matter, classics for children form the readers of the present day. Along with the nature study there has also arisen a demand for books relating to nature which can be read in school. Various efforts have been made to supply readers containing botanical matter. We have in these pages particularly commended the two books of selections by Miss Newell, which are admirably adapted to pupils in the grammar grades. We have before us a book which is intended for the primary grades. It is *Plants and their children*, by Mrs. William Starr Dana.¹

It is not often that the intentions of an author so happily coincide with the execution as in this book. It is written in a style that cannot but be attractive to children of the age addressed. They are introduced first to fruits and seeds, then to young plants, and later to buds, leaves, and flowers, in a series of short chapters. The matter is not only attractively presented, but, happily, it is accurate as to its facts, with very few exceptions. One error, which is a mere accident, and which every child will be able to correct, is the ascription of tendrils to the bean (p. 115). Some others occur in the physiological parts, where also there are some figures of speech which are apt to lead to misconception, as, for example, saying that roots suck in water "by means of tiny mouths" (p. 100), and that what this "broth" "really wants is *cooking*" (p. 144). Naturally, when Mrs. Dana attempts to set before her young readers the difference between plants and animals she is tempted into considering only the green plants and gives them a test which will make all fungi animals. Regarding the dodder and the mistletoe our author also leads her readers somewhat astray.

But aside from these and a few similar blemishes (which can readily be corrected in the plates) the book is the freest from error of any book of the

¹DANA, MRS. WILLIAM STARR.—*Plants and their children*. Illustrated by Alice Josephine Smith. 12mo. pp. 272. figs. 277. American Book Co. 1896. 65 cents.

kind that we have seen, and the author is to be heartily congratulated on the success of her work. The book is to be begun at the opening of the school year, and the lessons are so arranged as to discuss those objects which are accessible at the time when the lessons are intended to be read. The teacher is expected to have the objects themselves in the room, and if possible to have them collected by the children. We shall be much mistaken if an illustrated course of reading like this does not awaken in many a youngster a new interest in plants.

The illustrations are well drawn, and add much to the value of the book. A goodly number seem to be original; a few are from Kerner, which are acknowledged; while the majority are after the well known drawings of Sprague, in Gray's text-books, and might well have been acknowledged. The illustrator has drawn the English *Viscum* instead of the American *Phoradendron*, which is the mistletoe "sold in our shops at Christmas" over the greater part of the country, though possibly the English mistletoe comes to the New York markets. *Fig. 136*, alleged to be "a seed cut across," is like nothing in the heaven above or the earth beneath, and ought to be replaced.

Besides being suitable for schools this is the kind of book for which many parents are looking to put into the hands of their children, or to read with them in the home. Botanists are often asked to recommend such books, and there is now one which can be named to inquirers without misgivings.—C. R. B.

The nucleus.

THE recent extensive studies upon the cell nucleus have produced a voluminous literature regarding it. About three years ago a general and very brief summary of this literature was published by Dr. A. Zimmermann.² The same author has now brought together this and more recent scattered information, with critical sifting, to form a work upon the morphology and physiology of the cell nucleus.³ In the general part he thus discusses methods of research, nomenclature, distribution, number, size, and form of the nucleus, its chemical composition, the structure of the resting nucleus, division, fusion, and physiology. In the special part the present state of knowledge regarding the nuclear phenomena of each of the larger groups of plants is given, with especial reference to reproductive processes.

How voluminous is the literature thus critically examined is probably not appreciated except by those who have given special study to cytology. The main phenomena regarding the nucleus are much alike in plants and ani-

² Beihefte zum Bot. Cent. 3:206, 320, 401. 1894.—4:81. 1895.

³ ZIMMERMANN, A.—Morphologie und physiologie des pflanzlichen Zellkernes. Ein kritische Literaturstudie. 8vo, pp. viii + 188. figs. 84. Jena: Gustav Fischer. 1896. M 5.